

COUNCIL

13 October 2020

Present: Councillor A Dychton (Chairman)
Councillor B Mauthoor (Vice-Chair)
Councillors P Taylor, D Allen-Williamson, S Bashir, N Bell,
S Bolton, K Collett, K Crout, J Dhindsa, F Ezeifedi, A Grimston,
I Hamid, K Hastrick, M Hofman, P Jeffree, A Khan, P Kloss,
R Martins, M Mills, M Parker, J Pattinson, D Scudder, N Shah,
I Sharpe, R Smith, Stanton, J Stiff, M Turmaine, D Walford,
M Watkin, R Wenham and T Williams

Officers: Managing Director
Group Head of Democracy and Governance
Mayor's Political Assistant
Senior Democratic Services Officer
Democratic Services Manager

The Chairman welcomed everyone to this virtual Council meeting. She introduced the councillors and officers present and advised members about the voting system which was being used for the meeting.

31 **Apologies for Absence**

Apologies were received from Councillors J Johnson, S Johnson, Saffery and Stotesbury.

32 **Disclosure of Interests**

There were no disclosures of interest.

33 **Minutes**

The minutes of the Council meeting held on 14 July 2020 were approved. It was noted that the minutes would be signed once officers and members were able to return to the town hall.

34 **Official Announcements**

Civic deaths

The Chairman informed Council of the recent deaths of a number of former Watford councillors.

Richard Ahrens, a Labour councillor in Vicarage ward from 1986 until his resignation in 1990, had passed away in June. Councillor Bell paid tribute to Mr Ahrens.

Les Cox, a Labour councillor for Holywell ward for 12 years between 1976 and 1988, had also died in June. Councillor Bell spoke about the ex-councillor's contribution to the life of the town.

Former Labour councillor Robert Dean had died in August. He had been a Leggatts councillor from May 1979 until his resignation in 1989. Councillor Khan paid tribute to Mr Dean.

Jackie Connal, a Labour councillor for Holywell from May 2010 until her retirement in 2019 had died in September. The Mayor described Jackie Connal's strong commitment to local causes and lively engagement with her fellow councillors. Councillor Bell added his particular sadness at losing a dear and trusted friend, with whom it had been an honour to serve. Her empathy, charm and positivity would be greatly missed by her colleagues in the Labour Group. Collett also paid tribute on behalf of the Liberal Democrat Group.

Lastly, Council was informed of the death of the Mayor of Hertsmere Borough Council, Councillor Cynthia Barker. The Chairman advised that she had sent a letter on behalf of the council to her partner expressing the council's condolences.

The Chairman asked the meeting to observe a minute's silence in memory of these individuals who had been dedicated to public service.

Black History Month

The Chairman reported that a number of events had been organised in October to celebrate Black History Month. These were detailed on The Black History Month website www.watfordblackhistorymonth.co.uk and included Watford Museum's virtual exhibition about the Boxing Buxton family, which was due to be launched shortly.

Queen's Birthday Honours List

The Chairman congratulated Watford residents recognised in the Queen's Birthday Honours List as well as those who had contributed to the town as a part of their award.

35

Mayor's Report

A report of the Mayor had been circulated with the agenda.

The Chairman invited members to indicate whether they wished to ask a question of the Mayor. Councillors Bell, Turmaine and Smith indicated that they wished to ask questions.

1. Councillor Bell asked if the Mayor agreed that the latest decision by the West Hertfordshire Hospitals NHS Trust to transform the Watford General Hospital site was a welcome boost for the town.

The Mayor concurred that the decision was a significant boost for the town and would provide Watford with a modern healthcare facility fit for its dedicated healthcare workers.

2. In a supplementary question, Councillor Bell asked if the Mayor was encouraged by the decision to accept the Watford site as the primary site for healthcare facilities in south west Hertfordshire and whether he would encourage residents to get behind the plans.

The Mayor agreed that it was important that local residents in the area backed the healthcare proposals. The government sought new hospital facilities to be in place by 2025 and this would only be achievable on the existing site. The Mayor noted that the proposals had been supported by St Albans, Hertsmere and Three Rivers. They were also welcomed by healthcare workers.

3. Councillor Turmaine asked the Mayor to comment on recent changes to the authority's waste and recycling arrangements.

The Mayor thanked Veolia and council staff for the smooth implementation of the revised waste and recycling arrangements. A significant number of residents had signed up for the new service which would continue to be subsidised by the council.

Garden waste collections were not a statutory service and the Mayor noted they were not provided by all authorities. Where services were provided, charges varied significantly. Previously, a third of the waste in black bins had comprised garden waste. The Mayor hoped that the new arrangements would improve recycling rates whilst reducing the cost to local tax payers.

4. Councillor Smith asked the Mayor to provide an update on Watford's arts sector, including its key venues.

The Mayor underlined his commitment to retaining a thriving arts sector in Watford and maintained regular contact with the town's venues. He welcomed the Watford Fringe, which was taking place following some detailed work by the authority's environmental health team to ensure the event could be held safely.

The government's recent announcement of money to support the arts was to be welcomed, with £250,000 being allocated to Watford Palace Theatre. Watford Borough Council was doing all it could to support the town's venues at a difficult time for the arts.

36 **Questions by Members of the Council under Council Procedure Rule 10.0**

Questions had been received from Councillor Turmaine. The questions and answers had been circulated and published on the council's website.

37 **Questions by Members of the Public under Council Procedure Rule 11.0**

No questions from the public had been received.

38 **Petitions presented under Council Procedure Rule 12.0**

No petitions had been received.

39 **Business especially brought forward by the Chairman or the Head of Paid Service which in the opinion of the Chairman should be considered as a matter of urgency.**

There was no urgent business.

40 **West Herts Crematorium Joint Committee – Loan Agreement**

Council received the report of the Director of Finance which had been considered by Cabinet on 7 September 2020. An extract of the minutes had

been circulated with the agenda papers. The report sought approval for Watford Borough Council to enter into a loan facility agreement on behalf of the West Herts Crematorium Joint Committee (WHCJC) and to sign a Deed of Contribution and Indemnity with all five member authorities of the WHCJC.

RESOLVED –

1. that Watford, as one of the member authorities of the West Herts Crematorium Joint Committee, signs a loan facility agreement between Hertsmere Borough Council, St Albans City and District Council, Three Rivers District Council and Watford Borough Council as borrowers with Dacorum Borough Council as lender for £6 million to part fund a new Crematorium in Hemel Hempstead, subject to all the other 4 borrowing authorities passing similar resolutions;
2. that Watford signs a Deed of Contribution and Indemnity with all five partner authorities of the West Herts Crematorium Joint Committee, namely Dacorum Borough Council, Hertsmere Borough Council, St Albans City and District Council, Three Rivers District Council and Watford Borough subject to all the other member authorities passing similar resolutions;
3. that Council notes that in agreeing to (1) and (2) above that Watford are underwriting one fifth of the £6 million loan facility should the West Herts Crematorium Joint Committee default on repayment of the loan; and
4. that delegated authority be given to the Director of Finance to agree the final terms of the loan and indemnity agreements.

41

Local Development Scheme

Council received the report of the Spatial Planning Manager setting out revisions to the Local Development Scheme, adopted in March 2019. This updated the timetable for the different stages of preparing the new Local Plan.

RESOLVED –

1. that council adopts the revised Local Development Scheme
2. that minor updates to the revised Local Development Scheme be made by the Head of Planning and Building Control in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Regeneration and Development.

42 **Appointment of Second Independent Person to assist with Standards complaints**

Council received the report of the Group Head of Democracy and Governance proposing that Mr Nigel Gates be appointed as the second Independent Person in line with recommendation seven of the review by the Committee for Standards in Public Life on standards in local government.

RESOLVED –

that Mr Nigel Gates be appointed as the second Independent Person.

43 **Scrutiny Annual Report 2019/20**

Council received the report of the Senior Democratic Services Officer describing the work and process of the council's scrutiny committees and task groups during 2019-20.

RESOLVED –

that Council notes the annual scrutiny report for 2019-20.

44 **Neighbourhood Locality Fund Annual Report 2019/20**

Council received the report of the Democratic Services Manager providing the annual report for the Neighbourhood Locality Funds in accordance with the fund's protocol. This included information about the overall budget and types of projects the wards had supported during 2019/20.

RESOLVED –

that the Neighbourhood Locality Fund annual report be noted.

45 **Joint Committee for the Herts Growth Board**

Council received the report of the Group Head of Democracy and Governance. This included a detailed report prepared on behalf of all the councils in Hertfordshire and the Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) recommending to each authority and the LEP the setting up of a formal Joint Committee and Scrutiny Committee to manage and oversee the work of the Herts Growth Board.

RESOLVED –

1. that Council agrees to the establishment of the Growth Board and Growth Board Scrutiny Joint Committees (The first Growth Board Joint Committee to take place in early 2021 and the implementation of the Growth Board Scrutiny Committee to be aligned to MHCLG confirmation of a Growth and Housing Deal) for the Hertfordshire Growth Board and that the Council becomes a member of both.
2. that the Council adopts the Growth Board Integrated Governance Framework into its own constitutional framework.
3. that Council nominates the Chair of Scrutiny, and the Vice Chair of Scrutiny the substitute member, as its representative to the Scrutiny Committee. (Nominees must not be members of the Executive).
4. that Council notes that cabinet had appointed the Elected Mayor as the Council's representative on the Joint Committee and that the Elected Mayor was given delegated authority to nominate a substitute representative as required.

46

Motions submitted under Council Procedure Rule 13.0

The following motion had been proposed by the Elected Mayor and seconded by Councillor Bell:

“Watford Council thanks every member of staff for the outstanding efforts over the past few months in responding to the coronavirus pandemic.

We are opposed to any plan to create a single unitary council for the whole of Hertfordshire. This is the wrong time to be focusing on local government reorganisation and would take decision making away from local residents, and result in one council trying to serve a large area with 1.2 million people.”

Members debated the motion.

On being put to Council the motion was agreed.

RESOLVED –

Watford Council thanks every member of staff for the outstanding efforts over the past few months in responding to the coronavirus pandemic.

We are opposed to any plan to create a single unitary council for the whole of Hertfordshire. This is the wrong time to be focusing on local government

reorganisation and would take decision making away from local residents, and result in one council trying to serve a large area with 1.2 million people.

Chairman

The Meeting started at 7.30 pm
and finished at 9.20 pm